

ABSTRACT

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RECONSTRUCTIONS AND THE NATIONAL
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Elizabeth S. Ries, Historic Preservation
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Directed By: Dr. Donald W. Linebaugh, Chair

The National Park Service (NPS) has been a consistent leader in cultural resource management and historic preservation for almost 100 years. Along with historic structures, the NPS is responsible for the management and maintenance of reconstructed structures. Reconstructions, or the “imagined” past, have been contested over the years in terms of their authenticity and interpretive value. While the question of reconstructions continues to be debated, the NPS must contend with over 200 reconstructed features within the nation’s park system. This paper provides a critical examination of the contemporary issues related to maintaining the “imagined” built environment. Working from examples at three national parks, physical factors are addressed, as well as how the age of the reconstruction affects the planning and methods of maintenance of each resource. Conclusions integrate the maintenance issues facing the NPS with the future, long term preservation implications of using reconstructions to interpret the American past.

PRESERVING THE IMAGINED PAST:
RECONSTRUCTIONS AND THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

By

Elizabeth S. Ries

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Advisory Committee:

Professor Donald W. Linebaugh, PhD, Chair, Professor of Historic
Preservation

Professor Paul A. Shackel, PhD, Reader, Professor of Anthropology

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Jane Custer, Cultural Resources Program Manager, Antietam National Battlefield, Sharpsburg, Maryland

Donald W. Linebaugh, PhD Advisor, Director of Historic Preservation Program, Associate Professor, University of Maryland, College Park

Rijk Morawe, Cultural Resources Program Manager, George Washington Birthplace National Monument, Westmoreland County, Virginia

Rebecca Ross, Cultural Resources Program Manager, Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, Birdsboro, Pennsylvania

Paul A. Shackel, PhD, Second Reader, Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Maryland, College Park

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Introduction: The Maintenance Problem

According to the List of Classified Structures (2008b), the National Park Service identifies over 200 reconstructions within its park units. These reconstructions, what one might call the “imagined” past, are not limited to one region of the country, or to one period of history. Moreover, the reconstructions are not specific to one type of material or one category of significance. Reconstructed sites range from those constructed of brick to wood and even earthworks. This widely ranging group of reconstructed resources is used to interpret industrial, domestic, military, political, trade, and prehistoric events and significance.

This paper explores the reconstructed structures within the Park Service in terms of how these resources are managed and maintained. The Secretary of the Interior’s Guidelines define reconstruction as

the act or process of depicting, by means of new construction, the form, features, and detailing of a non-surviving site, landscape, building, structure, or object for the purpose of replicating its appearance at a specific period of time and in its historic location (NPS 2008c).

A critical examination of “imagined” construction will expose contemporary issues and concerns faced by National Park Service professionals in the management and subsequent interpretation of these sites. With management of these structures comes both interpreting this “imagined” built environment to the public as well as maintaining them. Contemporary issues and concerns faced by National Park Service professionals in the management and subsequent interpretation of these sites have been researched and debated heavily. However, the current literature does not address the issue of physically maintaining reconstructions, particularly when they

have passed the 50-year threshold for eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places.

The goal of this paper is to provide a starting point for engaging on going discussions of maintenance problems. In attempts at reaching that goal, research questions that get at contemporary planning and practices in the NPS are asked: (1) how does the NPS maintains reconstructions, (2) does the fact that the reconstruction is older than 50 years affect how it is maintained, (3) how does the type of material of the reconstruction affect its maintenance, and (4) what are the preservation implications for reconstructions in the National Park Service and the broader field of historic preservation?

The methodology used in this project is two-fold. First, I conducted a literature review. This allowed for a broad understanding of reconstructions within the historic preservation world, including the debates around their incorporation on the landscape. The literature review also provided historical context to their use within the National Park Service over the decades. Secondly, I took a case study approach. This approach entailed highlighting three reconstructed resources at three separate National Park units. In order to do so, I relied on general web research from each park's website, as well as research of parks' management plans and administrative histories. I also conducted interviews with NPS employees (Cultural Resource Managers) at the respective parks.

Three park units' cultural resources are highlighted as the case studies: Dunker Church, Antietam National Battlefield, Maryland; Cast House, Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, Pennsylvania; and Memorial House, George

Washington Birthplace National Monument, Virginia. Each of these parks' reconstructions represents a different topic and/or period in American history, as well as different types of construction material (stone, wood, and brick). One of the "imagined" structures is over 50 years old. With these differences in time, type, and material, comparisons between the maintenance of the "imagined" built environment and the managerial decisions at each site are made, along with the placement of the work into the historical context of archaeology and historical preservation.

Conclusions made from these comparisons will serve to inform, not only National Park Service employees, but also other historic preservation professionals, about practices of maintaining reconstructions. This research will be of use to organizations who are contemplating using a reconstruction to interpret the past, but who often neglect to consider issues of maintenance and long term preservation.

The reasons for choosing this research topic stem from my own experience as a Cultural Resources Division intern at Monocacy National Battlefield, Frederick, Maryland. Although no reconstructions exist on Monocacy's landscape, I experienced issues of maintenance on historic structures and the effect on the preservation of the resource. With discussions about policy and best preservation procedures for restored or adapted historic structures in my thoughts, I began to question how these discussions of maintenance play out when the resource is a reconstruction; a structure that was once on the landscape, had vanished, but since been constructed again.

The paper first looks at the theoretical debates over the purpose and use of reconstructions (Chapter 1) and the context of reconstructions within the NPS's

preservation planning history (Chapter 2). Chapter 3 details the three case studies (Antietam National Battlefield, Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, and George Washington Birthplace National Monument) used to examine the maintenance issues faced by parks with various types of reconstructions. The paper ends with a synthesis of the three cases (Chapter 4) and a discussion about the future preservation implications of using reconstructions to interpret the American past (Conclusion).

Chapter 1: The Reconstruction Debate

With heritage tourism increasing as an economic stimulant in America, preservation issues related to reconstructions have focused on their monetary value and historical authenticity... or lack thereof. Furthermore, discussions concerning reconstructions in the disciplines of historic preservation, archaeology, and public history revolve around the context, pre-planning, controversies, and historic value/interpretation of the construction of these historical replicas. While all of these issues are critical, little consideration has been given to how preservation professionals actually treat and maintain such structures once they are built.

This project aims to refocus research about reconstructions back to the replicas themselves in order to provide the National Park Service and the larger field of historic preservation with a discussion and conclusion about treatment issues surrounding some of our nation's most valued reconstructions. This research is especially valuable to the discipline and its professionals since many reconstructions within the National Park Service are 50 years or older or are about to cross that line to becoming "historic" structures potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and may therefore need to be considered as such when managing maintenance and future programming.

Anyone involved in the historic preservation field has no doubt heard the adage "better to preserve than repair, better to repair than restore, and better to restore than rebuild." Interestingly enough, even with rebuilding and reconstructing theoretically being the last ditch option when managing and interpreting a historic

resource, numerous reconstructions exist throughout the United States.

Reconstructions, significant for their aid in interpreting the past and building collective memory, are not associated to one type of organization or one region of the country. Private organizations, such as the Mt. Vernon Ladies Association and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, have found value in including reconstructions in the interpretation of historic sites. Similarly, governmental agencies, such as the NPS, have also used reconstructions as a way of interpreting the landscape and the past.

Two strong factions have formed concerning this controversial historic preservation practice. Pro-reconstructionists and anti-reconstructionists have debated the theoretical, ethical, interpretative, economic, and political value of reconstructions for years. The dilemma over these concepts and values are placed in the context of preservation planning, execution, visitor experience, and authenticity. As NPS archeologist Vergil Noble (2004:276) has written, the “driving forces behind site reconstruction are ultimately economic, political, or social, and simple entertainment of site visitors is often deemed more important than education as long as it gets them through the front gate.” These considerations seem to overwhelm issues of physical preservation, such as maintenance.

Issues about reconstructions are not restricted to the discipline of historic preservation or the National Park Service. Other professions also struggle with questions of reconstructing an imagined past. For example, engineers must take into consideration conflicts of authenticity verses stability. Attar (1991) discusses the balance and debate between authenticity and stability that many conservation

engineers face today while working on historic structures. Attar (1991:18) defines authenticity from an engineering point of view as “the function of three elements: materials, construction systems, and construction processes.” From this definition, authenticity does not describe genuine historic material or accurate replicas, but comes from a viewpoint that has structural concerns at the forefront rather than interpretive value. According to Attar (1991:20-21), if constructed with modern material and systems “produce the greatest loss of authenticity but probably will achieve the highest stability.” This further convolutes the concept of authenticity as pertaining to the use of reconstructions. Therefore, it is necessary to view other disciplines’ treatment of authenticity because they directly impact historic preservationists’ handling of authenticity within the overall reconstruction debate.

The reconstruction debates also include arguments about interpretative value or devalue of the past to the visitor. Kelleher (2004) discusses the irony between the public’s want of authenticity at heritage tourism sites with the inauthenticity that often exists at these sites. He claims many historically oriented sites, not just within the National Park Service, blur the lines between authenticity and inauthenticity. Kelleher (2004) points out that, in the past, reconstructions were used to assist visitors who needed a visual representation of the past in order to get a sense of place and time from an historical site. However, today, these “contrived” reconstructions serve not to assist visitors but to attract tourists and, more importantly, their money (Kelleher 2004). The question is whether or not future visitors will care if a structure is historically authentic, as long as there is a physical simulation. If this continues, Kelleher believes historic sites have the potential to become culturally devalued.

Reconstructions exist as a contradictory duality. Their mere presence may historically devalue a site, as Kelleher claims, but at the same time add economic and educational value to both the history interpreted and the history of the preservation at the site. It is obvious that reconstructions have the potential to teach the general public about the people who once lived there or the trade that was once performed at the site. For example, industrial structures (such as the Cast House at Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site) “have informational value as excellent education resources...when the site itself has been augmented by the addition of appropriate interpretive media” (Blockley 2004:187). What is not as obvious is, what Pitcaithley (1987:217) refers to as, the “backstage analysis” of the structural or physical history of a resource. The “backstage analysis” is the incorporation of the background story of the resource not from a historical interpretation but from a professional perspective. By including this “backstage analysis” into the reconstructed site’s interpretive program, visitors are informed about the “historical processes and of twentieth-century perceptions about how the structural past ought to be preserved” (Pitcaithley 1987:218). If such discussions are included in a reconstruction site’s interpretation, the educational value of reconstructions increases since research (such as archeological investigations used to inform the reconstructions at Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site) that preceded the physical construction of the structure could be highlighted.

Even more disparaging about this debate, beyond terminology and value, has been the lack of concrete guidelines in the post implementation of reconstructions. The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties

details the methods required before a reconstruction is built, but does not provide specifics as to the policies for treating these structures after they are built (NPS 2008c). The methodology regarding the reconstruction of buildings is quite stringent due to the potential for historical error and the lack of above ground physical evidence. According to the Secretary of Interior's Guidelines (2008c), the steps required in consideration of building a reconstruction include archival research and documentation of the original structure's significance (from historic photos, architectural drawings, Historic American Building Surveys, etc), subsurface archeological investigations, and identification and preservation of existing extant features associated with the original building. With all this information collocated, the actual reconstruction of the structure moves forward. Lastly, the guidelines insist that the reconstruction must be noted as such, through an interpretive sign or plaque.

Again, Noble (2004:276) declares, "[a reconstruction] is a product usually affected with the benefit of modern materials in science and technology; and it is a product that often employs intuition and imagination on the part of its creators....a reconstruction is not an end in itself." Noble is correct in his assertions that reconstructions are not an end in themselves; neither as an interpretive end nor as a physical end. But what about the physical aspects of reconstructions? All the attention in the Secretary of Interior's Guidelines seems to have been given to preservation issues stemming from the research and work to be completed before a reconstruction is built. An understanding of how these reconstructions are maintained is lacking in the field. As reconstructions are present on the cultural landscape, the

focus needs to move away from what happens before a reconstruction is built and toward what physically happens after the reconstruction is completed.

Even as the debate rages on, it is clear that the pro-reconstructions have had a stronger impact. Whether you agree or disagree with the use of reconstructions, they exist. Therefore, in the next chapter, I will use the National Park Service as a lens to look at the historical development of policy and management decisions with regards to the existence of reconstructions.

Chapter 2: Reconstructions and the National Park Service

As demonstrated in Chapter 1, there is no lack of research on the topic of reconstructions, even in the National Park Service. Many questions exist concerning the positive and negative outcomes of reconstruction, for example, interpretive values and agendas, and its effects on archaeological resources. This method of historic preservation relies on discussion among many stakeholders beyond that of just NPS professionals and managers, such as the general public and members of Congress. It is a long and multifaceted story involving public and political pressures and power. Therefore, for this scope of this paper, this is just a summary of the history of reconstructions within the National Park Service.

The Historic Sites Act of 1935 clearly authorized the NPS to reconstruct properties of national, historical, or archeological significance (Mackintosh 2004). Many reconstructions within the Park Service date back to the 1930s, and the various public works projects of the period, i.e. WPA, CCC, etc. For example, the earthworks at Yorktown Battlefield, Virginia and the controversial McLean House at Appomattox Court House, Virginia were reconstructed during this period. After World War II, the NPS's reconstruction activity focused on forts, such as Fort Union Trading Post in North Dakota (Hedren 1992) (Figure 2.1). In the 1970s, with American's Bicentennial, reconstructions at Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia came into the spotlight but took a radically different form. Benjamin Franklin's house was delineated by a ghost structure (Figure 2.2) instead of a full reconstruction, due to concerns over insufficient data on the original building (Mackintosh 2004:69).



Figure 2.1 Fort Union Trading Post Reconstruction, North Dakota/Montana Border

(NPS Photo, www.nps.gov/fous)



Figure 2.2 Franklin Court Ghost Structure, Philadelphia, PA

(NPS Photo, www.nps.gov/inde)

Despite the growing trend of commemoration and preservation of America's beginnings in the 1970s, reconstruction policy became more restrictive due to concerns for cost, authenticity, and impacts on archaeological remains. National Park Service's "Management Policies of 1975" (NPS 1975 as quoted in Mackintosh 2004:71) required reconstructions to meet four criteria:

1. There are no significant preservable remains that would be obliterated by reconstruction.
2. Historical, archeological, and architectural data are sufficient to permit an accurate reproduction with a minimum of conjecture.
3. The structure can be erected on the original site.
4. All prudent and feasible alternatives to reconstruction have been considered, and it is demonstrated that reconstruction is the only alternative that permits and is essential to public understanding and appreciation of the historical and cultural association for which the park was established.

The burdens of the cost of maintenance on reconstructions, as opposed to standing historic structures, helped the restrictive, anti-reconstructionists side in the 1970s.

The NPS Director at the time, Ronald H. Walker, pointed this out in 1973 by stating,

“[w]e are programming millions of dollars in historical reconstructions-of earthworks, of living farms, of pioneer villages-which are of doubtful justification when measured by the administrative policies and which will have to be maintained by the same costly techniques that apply to the genuine article” (Mackintosh 2004:70).

This suggests that maintenance practice on reconstructions should be the same as on historic resources. Exactly how the maintenance was being done for reconstructions is unclear, yet it is important to note that maintenance issues were being at least considered during this time period, not only by individual park personnel, but also by the NPS Director.

Under a new director, William Penn Mott, Jr., the NPS's "Management Policies" loosened somewhat in 1988. These revised policies valued reconstructions

explicitly as essential to public understanding of the cultural association of the park and took out language that stated that preservation should always receive first consideration over restoration and reconstruction (Mackintosh 2004:72). More importantly, the 1988 policies allowed for archeological data recovery in place of *in situ* preservation. These policies have changed little over the past twenty years.

But what about the life of the reconstructed structure? Putting aside the philosophical and bureaucratic debates over whether or not a structure should have been recreated, the reality is that many were built and now stand on the cultural landscape. The existence of these reconstructed buildings begs the question of how they are to be maintained and/or preserved for the future.

Chapter 3: Case Studies

In this chapter, I highlight three National Park units whose cultural resources include at least one reconstruction: Antietam National Battlefield, Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, and George Washington Birthplace National Monument. The three parks, located in the eastern United States, were chosen as case studies based on the age, type, and material of the reconstructions. For comparison and philosophical reasons, I detail maintenance issues on reconstructions that are both younger than and older than fifty years old, essentially meeting the age requirement for historic significance and nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. One of the reconstruction case studies is over fifty years old. In addition, I have chosen a sample of construction materials with the hopes of showing the wide range of maintenance issues associated with the various building materials. A tertiary characteristic of the case studies, but not one as important as the previous two, is their function or use. I examined industrial, domestic, and religious sites in order to illustrate the range of reconstructions within the National Park Service that are significant to the telling and interpretation of America's history.

Each case study will briefly detail the historical background of the Park (including its historical significance for being deemed a National Park), historical background of the reconstructed structure (including archeological investigations), and contemporary maintenance issues facing the reconstruction. Comparisons and discussion of the three cases will be presented in the analysis in Chapter 4.

Dunker Church, Antietam National Battlefield

Known as the bloodiest one day battle in American history, the Battle of Antietam took place on September 17, 1862, and saw the loss of approximately 23,000 soldiers' lives. Antietam National Battlefield commemorates and preserves this sad, but significant Civil War battlefield. The battle took place on numerous farms in and around the community of Sharpsburg, Maryland. One cultural resource significant to both the community and the battle is Dunker Church. Local German Baptist Brethren farmers (Church of the Brethren) constructed the church in 1852 (NPS 2008a) (Figure 3.1). Ten years later, combat waged all around the church that day in September, with the structure itself scarred with bullet marks. In addition, serious damage was done to the walls and roof. By 1864, the church was repaired and again holding Sunday services. In the early 20th century, the Dunkers built a new church and the old church was abandoned and left to souvenir hunters (NPS 2008a). The lack of regular maintenance weakened the structure and, in 1921, it was destroyed by a violent storm (Figure 3.2).

Soon after the storm, the ruins were put up for sale, and bought by Sharpsburg resident Elmer G. Boyer, who salvaged the remaining original materials and then sold the property. The new owners built a house on the old church's foundation, and by the 1930s, this previous place of worship was being operated as a gas station and gift shop. This domestic structure was removed in 1951 and the site was eventually donated to the National Park Service. In 1962, for the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Antietam, the Dunker Church was reconstructed on the original foundation with as



Figure 3.1 Northwest View of Original Dunker Church, Historic American Buildings
Survey Undated Photocopy (Courtesy of the Library of Congress)



Figure 3.2 Demolished Dunker Church, 1921(NPS Photo, www.nps.gov/anti)

many of the original materials as possible from Boyer's collection (NPS 2008b) (Figure 3.3).

For the most part, the Cultural Resource Division, working together with the Maintenance Division, treats the structure, only four years away from its 50th birthday, as if it were the original "with the exception...of some sealer type products which were attempted to solve moisture issues" (Custer 2008). Most of the salvaged original materials, such as bricks and flooring, were used around the main door of the church, which according to Jane Custer (2008), has been difficult to manage and maintain since that door is left open for public access. This is an example of degradation and the subsequent maintenance issues due to human impact

The biggest issue in Custer's opinion has been maintaining the plaster on the interior brick walls:

Until 2002 or 2003, when we received the report on maintenance problems, the structure had always been heated in the winter. It wasn't much heat but it was thought to help [in] maintain[ing] the plaster walls. The recommendations were not to heat, which we are now following.

However, this lack of heat has caused patches of plaster to chip away, which, in turn, have resulted in the need for repairs every couple years. The staff has stopped using gloss paint on the interior and now uses an assimilated whitewash product. The Cultural Resource Division and Maintenance Division have recently discussed stripping the exterior brick of gloss white paint and replacing it with a stain. But Custer (2008) points out that, "so far we are continuing to let the exterior paint weather and haven't resorted to stripping."

Not only have brick maintenance issues been a challenge at Antietam, but so have the reconstruction's general use. Custer (2008) mentioned that, "for a time, if



Figure 3.3 Dunker Church Reconstruction, circa 2008

(NPS Photo,www.nps.gov/anti)

living history participants were rained out at night, they would sleep in the church [without special permission from park staff] and we now charge a special use fee for private gathering, such as weddings, so park staff can be responsible for moving the furnishings.”

Therefore, staff at Antietam faces contemporary and recent maintenance issues of weathering, human impact, and material management at the Dunker Church reconstruction. No clear differences in approach exist between the Dunker Church and non-reconstructed historic structures at the battlefield, in spite of the Church’s “young” age.

Cast House, Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site

Hopewell Furnace, located near Reading, PA, was in operation between 1771 and 1883 (Figure 3.4). It was one of the first of its kind that helped lay the foundations for the American iron and steel industry and the industrial revolution. Numerous structures at this historic site were reconstructed as part of the Park Service’s Mission 66 funding for reconstructions and new constructions. These buildings include a smoke house, barn, and the ironmaster’s mansion. Another building reconstructed at the park in the mid-1960s, and the focus of this case study, was the Cast House (Figure 3.5). The Cast House, the center of the Hopewell community and location of the furnace, was rebuilt of stone (some from original structure), but mainly of wood (pine), in 1964-65 (Ross 2008).

The reconstruction of the Cast House was based off of three types of resources. The first was an existing photograph from 1880s, taken after the furnace



Figure 3.4 Artist's rendition of Hopewell Village during the 19th century
(NPS Photo, www.nps.gov/hofu)



Figure 3.5 Cast House Reconstruction, circa 2008 (NPS Photo, www.nps.gov/hofu)

closed in 1883. Secondly, NPS employees relied on information gained from archeology conducted in 1958. The archeological investigations uncovered foundations and artifacts associated with a melting shed and other annexes to the Cast House (Ross 2008). Last, the reconstruction was designed using oral histories conducted in the 1930s and 1940s with people who worked at Hopewell Furnace in the 1880s (Ross 2008).

Previous maintenance issues have required Cultural Resource managers and facility managers to face the difficulties of in-kind replacement and other cyclic maintenance due to the lack of money and/or in-house staff (Ross 2008). This becomes especially trying when oxidation of the wood calls for frequent replacement. Most recently, maintenance attention has been directed at trying to keep the building dry. Leakage in the roof and up to four feet of flood water in the Cast House has caused major maintenance and repair. The roof leak was repaired, with the patch being hidden from the public view (Ross 2008). Also, staff recreated underground drainage to mitigate the flooding. Maintenance work included adding a modern metal gutter to the Cast House, as well. This was done knowingly that this would not have existed in the 19th century, but with the expectation that the gutter will help keep water from standing on the floor and from rotting the wooden frame (Ross 2008).

Along with dealing with moisture problems, staff at Hopewell Furnace must face issues of the National Historic Preservation Act's Section 106 compliance.¹ National Register eligibility requires a structure to be 50 years old or older. The Cast

¹ Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 states that any federally assisted undertaking in any Federal department shall, before approval of expenditure of the Federal funds, take into account the effect of the undertaking on any district, site, building, structure, or object that is included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

House is not yet 50 years old, and, theoretically, any maintenance project would not need to be run through Section 106 compliance, but the park has struggled with this over the years. Ten years ago, the steeple of the Cast House was damaged in a storm. Before using federal money to replace it with a brand new steeple, the Cultural Resource Division went through Section 106 compliance and the steeple was replaced (Ross 2008). However, twelve years ago, the staff did not treat the building repairs and maintenance through Section 106 compliance with the reasoning that the structure was not 50 years old (Ross 2008). Despite the confusion with running maintenance projects through Section 106 compliance and the constant mitigation of moisture problems, today, park staff claim to “treat reconstructions [such as the Cast House] like original fabric” (Ross 2008).

Memorial House, George Washington Birthplace National Monument

George Washington’s birthplace in Westmoreland County, Virginia, was one of the Park Service’s first acquisitions in the 1930s. The landscape here has been contested throughout the twentieth century and, to this day, continues to be a park highlighted in the reconstruction debate, mainly for its follies. When the Park Service acquired the land, it “lacked both the house in which Washington was born and any good record of its appearance” (Mackintosh 1987:57). None of the original 18th century fabric was extant at the time the park was created in 1930. All original features were archaeological and sufficient information did not exist to build any reconstructions. Despite the lack of information, a private organization already had

plans to reconstruct the house (Memorial House) and proceeded to build a conjectured structure on the supposed foundations of the original.

Eventually, archaeological investigation uncovered another foundation nearby believed to be the true footprint of Washington's birth house; however, the Park Service did not make this known publicly to the visitors until 1975 (Mackintosh 1987) (Figure 3.6). After this acknowledgement of the Memorial Mansion, the park's management did not decide to remove it from the landscape. Today, the Memorial Mansion remains "to challenge park interpreters and confuse visitors, who find it hard to understand why an old-looking house at Washington's birthplace is not his birthplace or even a facsimile" (Mackintosh 1987:57).

The Cultural Resource Program Manager claims the park contains no reconstructions or replicas. It contains an imagined fabrication, in colonial revival style, of what buildings would have looked like at the time of George Washington's birth (Morawe 2008) (Figure 3.7). More specifically, the "Memorial House that architect Edward Donn, Jr. designed was not intended to be a replica but rather an idealized typical modest Virginia plantation house" (Beasley 2003:206); but, again, this was not interpreted to the public. Today, the park's website states

The Memorial House and Colonial Kitchen were constructed in 1931 to recreate the home in which George Washington was born. Typical of a moderately wealthy planter of the 1730's, the buildings are not true replicas of the original Washington plantation (www.nps.gov/gewa).

This description still uses the word "recreate" but as Rijk Morawe (2008) cautions

If one is not careful, it would be possible to read that it's patterned off the original. It is indeed unfortunate that they use the word "recreate" as it is NOT a recreation. However, I believe they intended to use the term more loosely to reflect the recreation of a plantation-style home, though again, the structure is a gross over-exaggeration of reality.



Figure 3.6 Outline of foundations of original birthplace, with Memorial House in background, to the right, circa 2008. (NPS Photo, www.nps.gov/gewa)



Figure 3.7 Memorial House, circa 2008. (NPS Photo, www.nps.gov/gewa)

Some existing structures were supposedly used as models for the Memorial House including Twiford and George Mason's home (Morawe 2008, Beasley 2003).

The Memorial House was never lived in and was not based upon archaeology at the site. Unfortunately, the Memorial House was built on top of an archeological feature, what later came to be known as a rather large out-building (Morawe 2008). In 1931, the Memorial House was brand new and constructed of native-sourced bricks, cement, and a wood-frame (Figure 3.8).

Due to its age and significance in the early stages of the reconstruction trend, the entire site is being considered for National Register listing (Morawe 2008). Therefore, maintenance is normally replacement-in-kind when needed though there has been a lot of lead abatement. The park is in the process of trying to obtain Historic Structures Reports that will aid the park in maintaining the structures to original schemes (Morawe 2008). In addition, efforts are being made to restore the original 1930s features such as brick side walks and hand rails. As an historic structure, management contends with maintenance issues such as weather, loss of original fabric, and compromises done through time in the name of "improvement" (Morawe2008). This maintenance work is done by park staff, NPS historic preservation specialists, or outside contractors.

Regardless of its authenticity, since the Memorial House, was built in the 1930s and, hence, over 50 years old, it is treated and maintained as an historic resource (Morawe 2008). So, theoretically, should there be any difference between the maintenance of reconstructions and this fabricated oddity? Here is where that 50 year old threshold makes a difference. Apart from of its historical authenticity as the



Figure 3.8 Construction of the Memorial House (right) and Colonial Kitchen (left) in 1931. (NPS Illustration, www.nps.gov/gewa)

reconstructed birthplace or its general historical image; since the Memorial House is over 50 years old, it is treated and maintained as an historic resource (Morawe 2008).

In summary, the case studies have demonstrated that a maintenance pattern exists throughout the different reconstructions present in the three National Park units. This pattern will be further discussed and expanded upon in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Maintaining the Imagined Past

This chapter synthesizes the information gathered from the interviews with staff at the three Park unit case studies. The highlighted reconstructions show that each had their own unique maintenance issues, as well as shared common problems. Table 4.1 provides a summary of the three case studies with each reconstruction's date of reconstruction, material type, and maintenance issues noted. Only one of the reconstructions, the Memorial House at George Washington Birthplace, breaks the 50 year threshold, making it recognized by NPS policy and guidelines as a historic resource. Related issues of the environment, weather, and moisture need to be dealt with at all three of the reconstructions. More cyclic maintenance attention is required at the Cast House and Memorial House due to the use of wood in the reconstruction. The cyclic maintenance includes the need of in-kind replacement.

Park	Reconstruction	Date Reconstructed	Material	Main Issues
Antietam National Battlefield	Dunker Church	1961	Stone Brick	Weathering Moisture Visitor Use
Hopewell Furnace	Cast House	1964-1965	Stone Wood	Flooding Section 106
George Washington Birthplace	Memorial House	1931	Brick Wood	Definitions Age

Table 4.1 Summary of Maintenance Issues

Each of the reconstructions must face their own maintenance issues. Antietam National Battlefield's Dunker Church is the only example where human impacts and visitor use were mentioned as affecting building maintenance. Hopewell Furnace's

Cultural Resource Program Manager was the only interviewee who stressed whether Section 106 compliance was applicable to the reconstruction. One would think that the Memorial House would have the least theoretical debates about maintenance due to its age; however, the mere definition of the structure (as a reconstruction, a replica, or an imagined fabrication) has caused staff to justify the treatment of this now historic structure.

It is important to take into consideration the “outside” factors which not only affect the initial decisions to reconstruct, but also greatly influence the maintenance of a reconstruction. More often than not, the physical structure itself does not have a loud enough voice when it comes to its preservation. Rather, it is the “politics, personalities, the thoroughness of the research, and the presence or absence of preservation funds [that] all affect the quality of the re-creation” (Pitcaithley 1987:207). Therefore, the maintenance at each of these three reconstructions, and no doubt other reconstructions within the National Park Service, will rely on their building material, their age, their environmental and human impacts; but ultimately, it is these elements not directly associated with the structure that dictate the planning and executing of the maintenance. Any small change in any of these elements (politics, power, research, money) will produce a different historic scene and the subsequent maintenance of that scene (Pitcaithley 1987).

Should reconstructions be preserved if they were not historically present or younger than 50 years old? According to this research, the answer is a definitive yes. No clear difference in maintenance planning and execution exist between the reconstructions and original historic structures in their parks. Therefore, age is not

the most important factor when addressing issues of maintenance. The major difference in treatment is the result of the structure's material type. In practice, the approach to maintenance is to treat them as *actual* historic resources. The future implications of this approach on reconstructions and the historic preservation world will be addressed in the conclusion.

Conclusion: Preserving the Imagined Past for the Future

With many of the reconstructions within the National Park Service celebrating their 50th, 60th, 70th, and even 80th birthdays, these structures are being recognized more and more as historic resources in and of themselves. In theoretical, and possibly financial, terms, preserving these “imagined” resources not present during the actual period of significance, might not be warranted. The inclusion of the “imagined” past at national parks may be criticized by some professionals and visitors, but as Mackintosh (1987:63) reminds us that

If historical interpretation by the National Park Service has faced challenges and displayed shortcomings, its overall influence has been positive, making many Americans aware of important aspects of their heritage that they had long forgotten or never learned about in school....The service may not tell the whole story, but it has told most of its part of the story well.

The maintenance of these reconstructions has clearly played a role in conveying concepts of American heritage. Moreover, these older reconstructions are significant evidence of the early philosophy and practices of the historic preservation movement in the United States. As the listing of 50+ year old structures representing an “imagined” past on the National Register of Historic Places may not be fully accepted, what cannot be contested is their value to the discipline of historic preservation and to the “back stage” interpretation of the preservation movement (Pitcaithley 1987).

Three implications from this conclusion of treating reconstructions as historic structures affect the future preservation of the imagined past. First, by treating the reconstructions as historic structures, no matter their material or age, the line between

what is “old”/ “original” and what is “new”/ “imagined” becomes blurred. This blurring does not only affect how the general public views the past landscape, it also affects how the park service chooses to manage the sites. Though little to no guidance is given by the Secretary of the Interiors Standards as to the maintenance practices on reconstructions, an explicit statement about recognizing a structure as such is included (NPS 2008c).

How, then, is the public made aware of the imagined beginnings of these structures? Antietam National Battlefield and George Washington Birthplace make it a point to recognize the structures as not historic, and thus, constructed in the 20th century. At Antietam, this is done through the mediums of “a main park brochure with tour map and a wayside in front of the Dunker Church that talk about the storm destroying the church and that it was rebuilt” (Custer 2008). In addition to the George Washington Birthplace park website, the visitor is informed through guided tours where Park interpreters are “all very explicit, in varying degrees, about the Memorial House not being a reconstruction or replica and describe it for what it is and what it represents” (Morawe 2008). The park brochure also reflects the Commemorative nature of early and describes the Memorial House as “this building is not a replica of his birthplace” (Morawe 2008).

The Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site is not as explicit. None of their signs, films or brochures pinpoints which buildings are reconstructions (Ross 2008). It is “up to the individual Park Ranger or staff member as to what information is given in informal interpretation or formal talks” (Ross 2008). Presently, their tours tend to focus on the 19th century, so information is given about what occurred

historically versus whether particular structures are reconstructions. All in all, Hopewell Furnace's public interpretation of reconstructions operates on a "we'll tell if you ask" policy.

Regardless of whether the structures were identified as reconstructions, provided little assistance in helping the visitor in distinguishing either side of the blurred line. For example, George Washington Birthplace explicitly interprets the Memorial House as neither a reconstruction nor a replica of his birthplace; it is just a fabrication. But according to visitor surveys, people still leave the park thinking they saw the house where our First President was born (Morawe 2008). Today, the Memorial House remains, as Mackintosh (1987:57) states, "to challenge park interpreters and confuse visitors, who find it hard to understand why an old-looking house at Washington's birthplace is not his birthplace or even a facsimile."

This blurring is also evident in management practices. Treating a reconstruction as an historic structure in terms of maintenance does not fully dictate all repairs or uses of the resource. For example, would Hopewell Furnace management have applied a metal gutter to the Cast House if it was indeed a historic 19th century structure? Or, would Antietam staff continue to allow weddings to be held in the Dunker Church if it was the structure standing during the 1862 Battle of Antietam?

As reconstructions are the last preservation option and such creators of controversy (and public confusion), will there be a future for them as interpretive tools? With all the maintenance issues addressed above, should the NPS try to continue to maintain and preserve these resources? These are tough questions to

answer and, unfortunately, it is not guaranteed that any answers will clear up this cloudy debate over preserving the imagined past. However, it is clear that reconstructions themselves are part of the history of preservation in America. From a more positive approach, the maintenance of the reconstructions as if they were originals structures is essential as a means to learn about “backstage” story of the historic trend of reconstructions within NPS management. For example, “even before the remains of Hopewell Furnace became a national historic site in 1938, the NPS employed the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) to reconstruct several features of the...iron-making complex” (Mackintosh 2004:66). Using public work programs in the 1930s and the NPS’s Mission 66 funding in the 1960s to build reconstructions is worthy of interpretation as it demonstrates the invested interest in our nation’s history.

As Pitcaithley (1987:208-209) states, “what is important to recognize is that re-created buildings are no more than a product of their times, a contemporary interpretation of the past... [they are] created within a certain social, political, and cultural environment.” Therefore, that and in addition to the hard to tackle issues of maintenance, the future of the imagined past may reside virtually on the Internet. Virtual reconstructions are gaining in popularity and have “one great advantage over their material counterparts, namely, they are readily altered...and may also be viewed from any perspective, creating almost the same ‘realistic’ illusion of the past as on-site reconstructions” (Brush 2004:249). When considering future reconstructions, the NPS may move towards a new age of historic preservation where reconstructions are not constructed with physical material, but with digital material in virtual worlds.

This alternative fits with the social and cultural environment of the early 21st century, and indeed, may not be suitable 50 years from now, but yet might offer some ease to maintaining and preserving the imagined past within the National Park Service.

This is by no means the definitive work on reconstructions and maintenance. Research and conclusions presented here are just on the tip of what more needs to be done on this topic. More research is needed to fully understand the issues and implications of treating reconstructions as historic structures. There exist four areas for continual and future research: creating “best practice” guidelines for reconstruction maintenance, broadening education and interpretive plans, researching maintenance on other material types, and researching other maintenance practices on reconstructions outside the NPS.

First, while guidelines do currently exist for reconstructing historic buildings, there exist no overarching guidelines for maintenance practices. Therefore more research is needed towards the construction of “best practice” guidelines, with maintenance issues as the focus. These new guidelines would be used by NPS professionals to assist them in terms of maintaining reconstructions as historic structures. Without such guidelines in place, inconsistencies in practices can occur which can lead to the endangerment of the “imagined” resources. An added benefit of these guidelines would be, for those looking to build reconstructions, an ability to consider the long term maintenance and preservation issues.

Second, research needs to be conducted on how to best incorporate the “backstage” story of the reconstructions themselves into the education and interpretative plans of the parks. As demonstrated in this paper, certain parks have

incorporated the story better than others. This type of collaboration, between historic preservationists and NPS interpretive rangers, is important because it greatly improves upon the educational value of the reconstructed resources.

Third, the scope of this paper was focused squarely on reconstructions through the lens of NPS. However, it might be beneficial to expand that to look at organizations outside the NPS who also use reconstructions at their sites. This will provide a broader view of maintenance issues and policies throughout the discipline of historic preservation.

Lastly, the reconstructions highlighted in the three case studies in this paper were constructed of stone, brick, and wood. These types of materials each have their own maintenance needs. Similar research questions as addressed in this paper could be used on another case study where the reconstruction is constructed from other building materials, such as earthworks. No doubt an earthwork reconstruction, like a fortification or a mound, would have maintenance issues different from those discussed.

The goal of this paper has been to shine light on the issue of how to best conduct maintenance on reconstructions, an issue that is often ignored in the literature. By using a case study approach, it was discovered that neither material type nor age had any bearing on whether reconstructions were maintained as historic structures. The implications of this practice of maintaining reconstructions as historic structures have the potential to change how NPS policy is addressed. Beyond this implication, this practice also further blurs the line between what is original and what is imagined for NPS staff and visitors. Even though more research needs to be done,

it is clear that this is important because maintaining these structures allow for us to continue valuing America's rich history and the discipline's history and progress.

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